

TREVOR LEGGETT

THE WARRIOR KOANS

EARLY ZEN IN JAPAN



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Trevor Leggett originally studied law at King's College, London, but has spent most of his working life as Head of the Japanese Service of the BBC. He has studied Judo to a very high level and taught the art in the UK for several years, founding a Judo club in North London. In 1984 he was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure by the Japanese Government, for services in spreading Japanese culture abroad – a rare honour for a non-Japanese. He retired in 1970, but still broadcasts as a guest in Japanese on the BBC's transmissions to Japan. He is the author of several books on Zen Buddhism including *Zen and the Ways*, *The Tiger's Cave* and *Encounters in Yoga and Zen* (all published by Routledge & Kegan Paul).



A very unusual picture of an interview in the fourteenth century between the feudal lord Kuroda and a Zen master on the kōan 'Is there Buddha nature in the dog?' 'No'.

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To the late Dr Hari Prasad Shastri
these translations are reverently dedicated

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The cherry-blossoms of Yoshino, which will bloom with the spring –
If we cut the tree open to find them, where would they be?

A number of these kōan stories make reference to the Katzu! shout, with occasional reference to a power of using it to strike a man unconscious. This is a field in which emotional scepticism is as strong as emotional credulity. It may be noted that in these records the victims were in many cases professional fighters. For a relatively modern instance, see E.J. Harrison's *The fighting spirit of Japan* (Foulsham). Harrison was a famous journalist in the Far East at the beginning of the century, who was also a considerable scholar, having a good knowledge of Japanese, of Russian, and even of that curiosity among languages, Lithuanian. In his youth however, he had been round the world in search of adventure, becoming for a time a lumberjack. He became an expert at Jūjutsu, and then at Jūdō. In his early days he was a compulsive bar-room fighter; there are accounts of some of his exploits in memoirs of old hands in Japan, such as Martyr. He had to give this up when he took up Jūdō, but he remained one of the most aggressive men I have ever met. He would not have been easy to overawe or 'hypnotize', especially in the pride of youth. Nevertheless he found himself helpless before an old Japanese expert of the warrior shout.

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adds that this gives a good idea of the old Kamakura Zen.

It is interesting that this poem precedes by over a century the famous verse attributed to Ikkyū, when he was challenged by a swordsman to produce the Buddha-nature. He replied that it is 'in the breast of man', and the opponent drew his sword to 'cut the breast open to find it'. Ikkyū made the verse:

The cherry-blossoms of Yoshino, which will bloom with the spring –
If we cut the tree open to find them, where would they be?

A number of these kōan stories make reference to the Katzu! shout, with occasional reference to a power of using it to strike a man unconscious. This is a field in which emotional scepticism is as strong as emotional credulity. It may be noted that in these records the victims were in many cases professional fighters. For a relatively modern instance, see E.J. Harrison's *The fighting spirit of Japan* (Foulsham). Harrison was a famous journalist in the Far East at the beginning of the century, who was also a considerable scholar, having a good knowledge of Japanese, of Russian, and even of that curiosity among languages, Lithuanian. In his youth however, he had been round the world in search of adventure, becoming for a time a lumberjack. He became an expert at Jūjutsu, and then at Jūdō. In his early days he was a compulsive bar-room fighter; there are accounts of some of his exploits in memoirs of old hands in Japan, such as Martyr. He had to give this up when he took up Jūdō, but he remained one of the most aggressive men I have ever met. He would not have been easy to overawe or 'hypnotize', especially in the pride of youth. Nevertheless he found himself helpless before an old Japanese expert of the warrior shout.

Imai's comments reflect accurately the distinction between the Zen shout and that practised by the warriors.

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It is interesting that this poem precedes by over a century the famous verse attributed to Ikkyū, when he was challenged by a swordsman to produce the Buddha-nature. He replied that it is 'in the breast of man', and the opponent drew his sword to 'cut the breast open to find it'. Ikkyū made the verse:

The cherry-blossoms of Yoshino, which will bloom with the
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If we cut the tree open to find them, where would they be?

A number of these kōan stories make reference to the Katzu! shout, with occasional reference to a power of using it to strike a man unconscious. This is a field in which emotional scepticism is as strong as emotional credulity. It may be noted that in these records the victims were in many cases professional fighters. For a relatively modern instance, see E.J. Harrison's *The fighting spirit of Japan* (Foulsham). Harrison was a famous journalist in the Far East at the beginning of the century, who was also a considerable scholar, having a good knowledge of Japanese, of Russian, and even of that curiosity among languages, Lithuanian. In his youth however, he had been round the world in search of adventure, becoming for a time a lumberjack. He became an expert at Jūjutsu, and then at Jūdō. In his early days he was a compulsive bar-room fighter; there are accounts of some of his exploits in memoirs of old hands in Japan, such as Martyr. He had to give this up when he took up Jūdō, but he remained one of the most aggressive men I have ever met. He would not have been easy to overawe or 'hypnotize', especially in the pride of youth. Nevertheless he found himself helpless before an old Japanese expert of the warrior shout.

Imai's comments reflect accurately the distinction between the Zen shout and that practised by the warriors.

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